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❖THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖

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IN the January STUDENT, certain "figures and facts" were indicated which related principally to the study of the Bible in the pastorate. The whole matter was summed up briefly as follows :

"Let everything be granted that is asked ; let every allowance be made that is demanded ; let every fact receive its most favorable interpretation. It nevertheless remains true that the ministry, taken through and through, comes far short of doing, in the line of Bible-study, what *is* expected of them, what *ought* to be expected of them, and what they *ought* to expect of themselves. The Bible is not known by them as it ought to be known, and is not used by them as it ought to be used. A reform is needed in this direction. Let it be inaugurated."

IS this statement too strong ? Is it without basis ? Is it a gratuitous criticism ? What do the ministers think ? Do they believe themselves to be doing, in this line, not what they might desire to do (no man does this), but even what they *ought* to do, or what they *might* do ? The great majority of ministers who ask themselves this question will do what hundreds of those did of whom the question was asked ; they will "confess"—(1) that they have by no means done what they might have done ; (2) that, in truth, they have scarcely realized, until brought face to face with the question, how little they have been doing ; (3) that, as a matter of fact, they have needed a stirring up on this question, and deserve censure for their neglect. There are some ministers, of course, who, in this particular, as indeed in all others, have performed their whole duty. The cases of such we need not consider.

WE need not go far to find explanations of these facts. It is notoriously true that theological seminaries have come far short of doing what ought to have been done for the students who have gone out from them.

Much, almost everything, depends upon the start which a man receives. If he is not taught to study the Bible in the divinity school ;

if the principles and methods of such study are not furnished him there; if an inspiration for such work is not received by him there,—is it probable that he will do his whole duty when he is settled in the pastorate? It is the *beginning* work in any study that is most difficult. It is to aid men in *beginning* such study that seminaries have been endowed. Yet in the case of nine seminaries out of ten, and in the case of nine men out of ten, nothing, in this line, has been accomplished. It is true, however, that, in the midst of what has been darkness, light is slowly dawning. The day is coming when to graduate from a theological seminary one must know something of the Bible. When that day shall have come, more of the Bible will be preached from the pulpit, and less of—"the world."

AGAIN, not every minister has a true appreciation of the importance of such study. It is difficult for one to feel the lack of something which he has never possessed. The ministry is pervaded by that spirit which characterizes exegetical study as "hair-splitting," the study of the original languages of the Bible as "altogether too laborious," the study of prophecy, or similar topics, as fruitless. It is still necessary—how long it may continue so is doubtful—to take one's text from the Bible; but it is no longer fashionable to take the sermon from the text. The Bible, in short, is being gradually but surely crowded out. It is old; the demand is thought to be for something new. Ministers have, in too many cases, forgotten that the brightest, freshest and most interesting material to be found is in the Bible. They are blind to the fact that the people, everywhere, are wide-awake to Bible-thought and Bible-truth, if but properly presented. It is a serious mistake to lack appreciation for the value of Bible-material in their own up-building, as well as in that of those who are dependent on them for spiritual food. Yet multitudes of ministers make this mistake. If only the testimony of those who have gone deep into this kind of work were to be accepted, if the experiences of the Taylors, the Duryeas and the MacArthurs were to be studied, it would not appear that five ministers out of every ten had no time for real Bible-study.

No small part of the explanation of these facts is to be found in the tendency, which characterizes the ministry of to-day, to get along without study of any kind. Our ministry cannot be called a studious ministry. In many respects it excels the ministry of any preceding age; but in this one respect it shows decadence. Ministers have, in too many instances, either never acquired habits of study, or, if ac-

quired, they have lost them. Matters of the most trivial character are permitted to interrupt their work. They take upon themselves the entire responsibility, financial as well as spiritual, of their charges. They weigh themselves down with details with which they have no business to meddle. They do not systematize their work in order to allow intellectual work even a fair share of their time. Men thus burdened do not, cannot study. And in the general neglect, the Bible must suffer.

MINISTERS do not study the Bible as they ought to study it, and as it deserves to be studied. They themselves acknowledge this to be the case; and when attention is called to the fact, in most cases resolve to do more work of this kind.

Of those now in the pastorate few have ever received that fundamental training in real study of the Bible, that needed inspiration for it, which would lead them to continue it in the pastorate.

Too many fail to see the absolute importance of such work, and the necessary connection which it sustains to the success of their labors.

Too many, alas! have no true idea of study, have no habits of study, have no ability so to systematize their time and work as to allow for real intellectual exercise.

These are some, but not all, of the reasons *why* Bible-study in the pastorate is neglected.